

IMAGE FORMING APPARATUS

[0001]

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates to an image forming
5 apparatus.

[0002]

In an image forming apparatus which uses the
electrophotographic system, conventionally, a photosensitive
member which is an image carrier is charged by a charging
10 device, the charged photosensitive member is irradiated with
light corresponding to image information to form a latent
image, the latent image is developed by a developing device,
and the developed toner image is transferred to a recording
medium to form an image.

15 [0003]

In accordance with advancement of the image colorization,
a tandem color image forming apparatus having plural image
forming units for respectively performing image forming
processes has been proposed. In such apparatus, color toner
20 images including a cyan image, a magenta image, a yellow
image, and preferably a black image are formed on respective
photosensitive members, and the toner images are overlaid and
transferred to an endless intermediate transfer member in
transferring positions of the photosensitive members, thereby
25 forming a full-color image.

[0004]

Such a tandem color image forming apparatus has the image forming units for respective colors, and hence is advantageous in enhancing the speed.

[0005]

5 Hereinafter, a conventional tandem color image forming apparatus will be described.

[0006]

Fig. 11 is a diagram showing the configuration of a conventional color image forming apparatus.

10 [0007]

Referring to Fig. 11, in a main unit 1 of the color image forming apparatus, image forming units 2, 3, 4, 5 for respectively forming toner images of yellow (Y), magenta (M), cyan (C), and black (K) are placed. Exposing devices 6a, 6b, 15 6c, 6d are disposed so as to respectively correspond to the image forming units 2 to 5. The image forming units 2 to 5 comprise: photosensitive drums (photosensitive members) 2a, 3a, 4a, 5a which are irradiated with laser beams emitted from the exposing devices 6a to 6d to form electrostatic latent 20 images on their peripheral faces; developing rollers (developing sections) 2b, 3b, 4b, 5b which cause toners supplied from respective toner tanks to adhere to the photosensitive drums 2a to 5a, thereby developing the electrostatic latent images as toner images; and cleaning 25 blades which remove away toners that remain on the photosensitive drums 2a to 5a after the image transfer.

[0008]

An endless intermediate transfer belt (intermediate transfer member) 7 to which the developed color toner images on the photosensitive drums 2a, 3a, 4a, 5a are to be overlaid and transferred to form a color toner image is placed below the image forming units 2 to 5 so as to be runnable in the direction of the arrow. In a loop of the intermediate transfer belt 7, a driving roller 8, a tension roller 9, four first transfer rollers 10a, 10b, 10c, 10d, and a driven roller 11 are arranged.

[0009]

A sheet supply cassette 13 in which sheets (recording media) P are housed is disposed in a lower portion of the apparatus. The sheets P are fed one by one from the sheet supply cassette 13 to a sheet transport path by a sheet feed roller.

[0010]

A second transfer roller 12 which is in contact with a given distance of the outer peripheral face of the intermediate transfer belt 7 in the position of the driven roller 11, thereby transferring the color images on the intermediate transfer belt 7 to the sheet P, and a fixing device 14 which fixes the color images transferred onto the sheet P, to the sheet P are placed on the sheet transport path.

[0011]

The photosensitive drums 2a to 5a of the image forming units 2 to 5 cause the yellow, magenta, cyan, and black toner images to attach to the surface of the intermediate transfer belt 7, thereby forming color images. The toner color images are transferred to the sheet P fed from the sheet supply cassette 13, by a nip force exerted between the driven roller 11 and the second transfer roller 12. The sheet P is then fed to the fixing device 14, and the toner image is fixed thereto. Thereafter, the sheet is discharged.

[0012]

In the color image forming apparatus, each of the above-mentioned cleaning blades is formed by a body portion configured by an elastic plate member, and a planar base plate portion to which the body portion is secured. The base plate portion is directly secured to a case of the apparatus by screws (for example, see Japanese Patent Publication JP-A-2002-006705).

[0013]

In the configuration of the conventional art, the cleaning blades must be secured by using screws. Therefore, the workability of the assembly process is impaired.

[0014]

The cleaning blades are secured by passing the screws through holes formed in the cleaning blades. Consequently, it is difficult to ensure the dimensional accuracy between the cleaning blades and the respective photosensitive drums.

[0015]

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

It is an object of the invention to provide an image forming apparatus in which the workability of assembling of a cleaning blade is excellent.

[0016]

It is another object of the invention to provide an image forming apparatus in which the dimensional accuracy between a cleaning blade and a photosensitive member can be properly ensured.

[0017]

In order to solve the problems, the image forming apparatus of the invention comprises: a photosensitive member which is rotatably disposed, and on which an electrostatic latent image is developed to form a toner image; a cleaning blade which includes a body portion configured by an elastic plate member, and a base plate portion supporting the body portion, and which removes away a toner that remains on the photosensitive member after the toner image is transferred, by means of the body portion that pressingly contacts the photosensitive member; a housing which holds the photosensitive member and the cleaning blade; and a recess which is disposed in the housing, and which accommodates at least part of the base plate, and the cleaning blade being pressingly secured to the recess by the photosensitive member.

[0018]

According to the configuration, since the cleaning blade is pressingly secured to the recess of the housing by the photosensitive member, the cleaning blade is not required to be screw-secured to the housing. Therefore, the workability
5 of the assembly process is improved.

[0019]

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Fig. 1 is a diagram showing the configuration of a color image forming apparatus which is a first embodiment of the
10 invention;

Fig. 2 is a diagram showing in detail an image forming unit in the color image forming apparatus of Fig. 1;

Fig. 3 is a perspective view showing a cleaning blade which is to be attached to the image forming unit of Fig. 2;

15 Fig. 4 is a perspective view of the image forming unit of the first embodiment of the invention in which the cleaning blade has not yet been attached to a holding portion, as viewed from the left front side;

20 Fig. 5 is a perspective view of the image forming unit of the first embodiment of the invention in which the cleaning blade has not yet been attached to the holding portion, as viewed from the right front side;

Fig. 6 is a partial enlarged perspective view showing the vicinity of a left recess in Fig. 5;

25 Fig. 7 is a perspective view showing a state where the cleaning blade is attached to the image forming unit shown in

Fig. 5;

Fig. 8 is a partial enlarged perspective view showing the vicinity of the left recess in Fig. 7;

Fig. 9 is a partial cutaway view showing the state where
5 the cleaning blade is attached to the image forming unit shown in Fig. 5;

Fig. 10 is a diagram illustrating a state where the cleaning blade in the first embodiment of the invention is secured; and

10 Fig. 11 is a diagram showing the configuration of a conventional color image forming apparatus.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

[0020]

Hereinafter, an embodiment of the invention will be
15 described with reference to Figs. 1 to 10. In the figures, identical components are denoted by the same reference numerals, and duplicated description will be omitted.

[0021]

Referring to Fig. 1, in the main unit 1 of the color
20 image forming apparatus, the image forming units 2, 3, 4, 5 for respectively forming toner images of yellow (Y), magenta (M), cyan (C), and black (K) are detachably placed in sequence. The exposing devices 6a, 6b, 6c, 6d are disposed so as to respectively correspond to the image forming units 2 to
25 5.

[0022]

As shown in Fig. 2 in detail, each of the image forming units 2 to 5 comprises: the photosensitive drum (photosensitive member) 2a, 3a, 4a, or 5a which serves as a rotatable image carrier; a charging device (charging section) 15 which charges the photosensitive drum 2a to 5a to a uniform potential; the developing roller (developing section) 2b, 3b, 4b, or 5b for causing a toner supplied from a toner tank to adhere to the photosensitive drum 2a to 5a in which an electrostatic latent image is formed on the peripheral face by irradiation of a laser beam emitted from an exposing device 6a to 6d, thereby developing the electrostatic latent image as a toner image; an agitator 16 which agitates the toner in the toner tank; a supply roller 17 which supplies the toner to the developing roller 2b to 5b; a doctor blade 18 which adjusts the thickness of the toner supplied to the developing roller 2b to 5b to a predetermined value, and which charges the toner by friction; and a cleaning blade 19 which removes away a toner that remains on the photosensitive drum 2a to 5a after transferring the image to the intermediate transfer belt 7.

The photosensitive drums 2a, 3a, 4a, 5a which are circumferentially rotated are arranged in a row so that their rotation axes are parallel to one other.

[0023]

As shown in Fig. 3, the cleaning blade 19 includes a body portion 19a configured by an elastic plate member made of urethane rubber or the like, and a planar base plate portion

19b to which the body portion 19a is secured, and which is a sheet metal having an L-like section shape. A residual toner is removed away by the body portion 19a which pressingly contacts the photosensitive drum 2a to 5a.

5 Left and right butting parts 104 and 106 are formed in left and right end portions 100 and 102 of the base plate portion 19b, respectively. In the left and right butting parts 104 and 106, the base plate portion 19b does not have an L-like section shape.

10 [0024]

As shown in Figs. 4 and 5, holding portions 20 are molded integrally with a resin-made housing 200 of the image forming unit 2. Left and right recesses 108 and 110 for holding the cleaning blade 19 are formed in the holding portions 20, respectively. Immediately below the vicinities of the left and right recesses 108 and 110 in the holding portions 20, left and right hooks 20a and 120a are molded integrally with the housing 200 in order to provisionally attach the cleaning blade 19 to the housing 200. A taper 124 is formed in each of the left and right hooks 20a and 120a.

[0025]

As shown in Figs. 6 and 10, the left recess 108 is formed by: a front wall 114 which is positioned in the front side in the rotation direction of the photosensitive drum 2a; a rear wall 116 which is positioned in the rear side in the rotation direction of the photosensitive drum 2a; and a bottom 112

which is positioned between the front and rear walls 114 and 116. A rod-like front projection 118 is formed on the front wall 114 in parallel with the bottom 112. A rod-like rear projection 122 is formed on the rear wall 116 in parallel with the bottom 112 in a position which is more separated from the bottom 112 than the front projection 118. The distance between the front and rear walls 114 and 116 is set to be larger than the thickness of the left and right end portions 100 and 102. The right recess 110 is configured in a similar manner as the left recess 108.

[0026]

In the production and assembling of the housing, the cleaning blade 19 is attached in the following manner. The base plate portion 19b of the cleaning blade 19 is inserted into the left and right recesses 108 and 110 which are formed in the holding portions 20 shown in Fig. 5. At this time, the insertion is conducted so that the left and right butting parts 104 and 106 butt against the bottom 112 of the left recess 108 and the bottom (not shown) of the right recess 110, respectively. In the insertion, the plate parts which are perpendicular to the body portion 19a in both the end portions of the base plate portion 19b are inserted so as to override the left and right hooks 20a and 120a, respectively. Therefore, the cleaning blade 19 is provisionally secured to the housing 200 with forming a play of a certain degree, by the left and right hooks 20a and 120a (Figs. 7 and 8).

[0027]

As shown in Fig. 10, thereafter, the photosensitive drum 2a is attached to the housing 200 while the body portion 19a of the cleaning blade 19 is pressed in the directions of F1 and F2, whereby the cleaning blade 19 is firmly secured to the housing 200.

[0028]

As a result, each of the holding portions 20 butts against the base plate portion 19b in: a first butting part P1 which is a predetermined position in a first face S1 positioned in a front portion of the base plate portion 19b in the rotation direction of the photosensitive drum 2a to 5a; a second butting part P2 which is in a second face S2 opposed to the first face S1, and which is positioned closer to the photosensitive drum 2a to 5a than the first butting part P1; and a third butting part P3 (a place corresponding to the left and right butting part 104 or 106) which is an end part of the base plate portion 19b that is opposite to the photosensitive drum 2a to 5a.

[0029]

In the illustrated example, the first and second butting parts P1 and P2 are formed by projections 21 which are formed on the holding portion 20. Alternatively, such projections may be formed on the base plate portion 19b. The image forming units 3, 4, 5 are configured in the same manner as the image forming unit 2 described above.

[0030]

Referring to Fig. 1, the endless intermediate transfer belt (intermediate transfer member) 7 to which the developed color toner images on the photosensitive drums 2a, 3a, 4a, 5a are to be overlaid and transferred to form a color toner image is placed below the arranged image forming units 2 to 5 so as to be runnable in the direction of the arrow. In a loop of the intermediate transfer belt 7, arranged are the driving roller 8 which drives the intermediate transfer belt 7 to run, the tension roller 9 which applies given tension to the intermediate transfer belt 7, four first transfer rollers 10a, 10b, 10c, 10d which are arranged correspondingly with the photosensitive drums 2a to 5a, and which cause the intermediate transfer belt 7 to pressingly contact the photosensitive drums 2a to 5a to transfer the color toner images on the photosensitive drums 2a to 5a to the intermediate transfer belt 7, and the driven roller 11 which is rotated as a result of the rotation of the intermediate transfer belt 7 by the driving roller 8. The intermediate transfer belt is circulatingly driven so as to run around these rollers in the direction of the arrow.

[0031]

During a printing period, the tension roller 9 is urged by a spring (not shown) to be moved toward the right lower side in the figure, thereby applying tension to the intermediate transfer belt 7. During a non-printing period,

the tension application to the intermediate transfer belt 7 by the tension roller 9 is cancelled, so that the intermediate transfer belt 7 is not wound around the rollers in the same positions for a long time, thereby suppressing the curling tendency.

[0032]

The sheet supply cassette 13 in which sheets (recording media) P are housed is disposed in a lower portion of the apparatus. The sheets P are fed one by one from the sheet supply cassette 13 to a sheet transport path by a sheet feed roller.

[0033]

The second transfer roller 12 which is in contact with a given distance of the outer peripheral face of the intermediate transfer belt 7 in the position of the driven roller 11, thereby transferring the color image on the intermediate transfer belt 7 to the sheet P, and the fixing device 14 in which the color image transferred onto the sheet P is fixed to the sheet P by the pressure and heat due to the clamp rotation of the roller are placed on the sheet transport path.

[0034]

In the thus configured image forming apparatus, a latent image of a yellow component color is first formed on the photosensitive drum 2a of the image forming unit 2. The latent image is developed as a yellow toner image by the

developing section 2b having a yellow toner, and then transferred as a yellow toner image onto the intermediate transfer belt 7 by the first transfer roller 10a.

[0035]

5 During a period when the yellow toner image is transferred to the intermediate transfer belt 7, a latent image of a magenta component color is formed in the image forming unit 3, and then a magenta toner image is developed by a magenta toner in the developing section 3b. The magenta
10 toner image is transferred by the first transfer roller 10b of the image forming unit 3, to the intermediate transfer belt 7 in which the transfer of the yellow toner image by the image forming unit 2 has been ended, so that the magenta toner image is overlaid on the yellow toner image.

15 [0036]

Thereafter, image forming processes are similarly conducted on cyan and black toner images, whereby the overlaying of the four color toner images on the intermediate transfer belt 7 is ended.

20 [0037]

The color images formed on the intermediate transfer belt 7 are collectively transferred to the sheet P fed from the sheet supply cassette 13, by a nip force exerted between the driven roller 11 and the second transfer roller 12. The
25 transferred toner images are thermally fixed to the sheet P by the fixing device 14 to form a full-color image on the sheet

P, and the sheet is then discharged.

[0038]

In the color image forming apparatus, as described above, the cleaning blade 19 is pushed so as to override the left and right hooks 20a and 120a, whereby the cleaning blade 19 is provisionally secured to the holding portions 20. The cleaning blade is then pressingly contacted by the photosensitive drum 2a to be completely secured to the image forming unit 2. Therefore, it is not required to secure the cleaning blade 19 by using screws, and the workability of the assembly process is improved.

[0039]

The cleaning blade 19 is held by butting the base plate portion 19b against the holding portions 20 in the first, second, and third butting parts P1, P2, and P3.

[0040]

As shown in Fig. 10, with respect to the force F1 which is produced in an approximately outward radial direction of the photosensitive drum 2a to 5a by the pressing contact between the photosensitive drum 2a to 5a and the cleaning blade 19, therefore, displacement of the cleaning blade is blocked by the first and second butting parts P1 and P2. With respect to the force F2 which, when the photosensitive drum 2a to 5a is rotated, acts on the cleaning blade 19 in a substantially tangential direction of the photosensitive drum 2a to 5a, displacement is blocked by the third butting part

P3.

[0041]

According to the configuration, the body portion 19a of the cleaning blade 19, and the photosensitive drum 2a contact each other at a uniform pressure over the whole butting face of the body portion 19a. Unlike the case where such a blade is secured by screws, therefore, displacement does not occur, so that the dimensional accuracy between the cleaning blade 19 and the photosensitive drum 2a to 5a can be properly ensured.

[0042]

In the above, the embodiment in which the invention is applied to an image forming apparatus for forming a color image has been described. The invention can be applied also to an image forming apparatus for forming a monochrome image.

[0043]

As described above, according to the invention, the cleaning blade is pressingly secured by the photosensitive member. Therefore, screws or the like are not necessary in fixation of the cleaning blade, and the dimensional accuracy between the cleaning blade and the photosensitive member can be properly ensured.

Moreover, the cleaning blade is attached to the holding portion by simply pushing the cleaning blade so as to override the hook. Therefore, it is possible to attain an effect that the workability of assembling of the cleaning blade is improved.